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ACTION: Amembassy MOSCOW 990 PRIORITY

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SS Special intelligence note to Secretary interprets Zorin UN speech as follows:

L Speech reaffirmed emphasis in Soviet Government statement that issue in current crisis was in first instance between US and Cuba, and maintained evident
ARA Soviet effort to avoid posing issue as one of direct Soviet-US confrontation.
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Aims of this approach are (1) to garner sympathy for US reversal of quarantine,
(2) to downgrade threat to US, (3) to dampen war scare among Soviet people.

Clearly fiction of purely US-Cuban crisis will be hard to maintain once there is US-Soviet incident at sea. On balance, we think it probable Soviets will risk such incident in expectation that resultant rise in tension will stimulate pressures on US to end quarantine and give rise to various kinds of compromise proposals. This will also gain time for Soviets to determine (1) whether US has made plausible case on missile issue, (2) whether Soviet line that any Communist weapon is defensive can be sustained, (3) whether bargain is available whereby missiles can be withdrawn gracefully or (4) whether to risk escalation to counter US quarantine.

END

RUSK

Drafted by:

INR/RSB: M. Rothenberg: smm 10-24-62

Cleared by:

Telegraphic transmission and
classification approved by:

INR - Thomas L. Hughes RUSK

INR/RSB - Howard Trivers

SOV - Mr. Guthrie

INR/CS - Mr. McAfee

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